

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

As noted in paragraph 0002 of the present application, a laser beam of sufficient energy can harm an operator coming in contact therewith.

The present application discloses a laser beam containment system which protects operators from harm while still enabling an optic to be accessed without disturbing the distance relationship between adjacent optics.

A disclosed preferred embodiment of the containment system comprises a laser-conducting structure for conducting a laser beam along a path from a laser beam source 100 to a point of application 200 of the laser beam. The entire laser beam is encapsulated within the laser-conducting structure along the path from the laser beam source 100 to the point of application 200 (see Fig. 4). The preferred laser-conducting structure includes at least two optics 34a and 34b for directing the laser beam, and a tube arrangement 22b, 25 interconnecting those optics. The tube arrangement is movable out of the laser beam path for allowing access to at least one of the optics without disturbing the distance relationship between those optics (see the final sentence of paragraph 0014).

Preferably, the tube arrangement includes first and second telescoping tube portions 22b, 25, wherein telescoping movement between those tube portion shortens an effective length of the tube arrangement to facilitate movement of the tube arrangement out of the laser beam path. The latter movement is preferably afforded by a pivotal connection 42, 44 between the tube portion 25 and the block 32b of the optic 34b. As the length of the tube arrangement is shortened, the tube portion 22b becomes disconnected from the block 32a of the optic 34a to allow the

entire tube arrangement to be swung upwardly about the pivot connection, as shown in Fig. 2. The telescopic movement of the tube arrangement can be prevented by the insertion of a locking mechanism which includes a retainer 72 and a padlock similar to the padlock 14 located at the end of tube 22a in Fig. 1. It will be appreciated that an operator is protected by the encapsulation of the laser beam within the locked-up tube arrangement, and yet the tube arrangement can be unlocked and moved out of the laser beam path without disturbing the distance relationship between the adjacent optics.

New independent claim 21, which replaces original claim 1, recites a laser beam containment system which comprises a laser-conducting structure for conducting a laser beam along a path from a laser beam source to a point of application of the laser beam. The entire laser beam is encapsulated within the laser-conducting structure along the entire path from the laser beam source to the point of application. The laser-conducting structure includes at least two optics for directing the laser beam, and a tube arrangement interconnecting the at least two optics. The tube arrangement is movable out of the laser beam's path for allowing access to at least one of the at least two optics without disturbing the distance relationship between those optics.

Original claim 1 was rejected as anticipated by the *Sharon* patent. However, it is submitted that new claim 21 distinguishes patentable thereover. For example, *Sharon* does not encapsulate the entire laser beam along the path from the source to the point of application, as is evident from the gap depicted above the optic 16 in the lower portion of Fig. 4 of *Sharon*. Moreover, it is not seen that any of the tube arrangements disposed between adjacent optics in *Sharon* can be moved out of the

laser beam path without disturbing the distance relationship between those optics, as presently claimed. For example, in Fig. 4 of *Sharon*, it would be necessary to move one of the optics 126, 136 (thereby disturbing their distance relationship) in order to move the tube arrangement 251, 252 out of the laser beam's path. For at least those reasons, it is submitted that claim 21 distinguishes patentably over *Sharon*.

Furthermore, it is not seen that *Sharon* discloses the novel arrangement of telescoping tube portions, wherein telescoping movement between those tube portions shortens an effective length of the tube arrangement to facilitate movement of the tube arrangement out of the laser beam path, as recited in dependent claim 22. *Sharon* discloses a telescoping tube 20, but it is provided for adjusting the vertical height of the overall apparatus, rather than enabling a tube arrangement to be moved out of the laser beam's path.

In addition, it is not seen that *Sharon* discloses or teaches a retainer for preventing the telescoping movement, or, a retainer which includes a separate padlock, as recited in other dependent claims, such as claims 23 and 24, for instance.

Dependent claim 27 is directed to a feature wherein a sleeve 26 is slidable along the tubular arrangement for covering/exposing a transverse passageway 25' which provides access to the laser beam path. Such a feature is neither disclosed nor taught by *Sharon*.

The allowance of original dependent claim 10 is noted with appreciation. That claim has been rewritten as new independent claim 33.

Applicants have canceled non-elected claims 15-20, reserving the right to file a divisional application on the invention defined by those claims.

In light of the foregoing, it is submitted that all of the present claims distinguish patentable over the cited prior art, and that the application is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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